

Message Text

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R 060735Z MAR 74

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9833

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

DIA

CINCUSARPAC

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CINCPACAF

COMUSTDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 HONG KONG 2501

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CH, TW

SUBJ: LESS OPTIMISM IN PEKING ON THE TAIWAN ISSUE

SUMMARY: THE PRC APPEARS LESS OPTIMISTIC THAN IT WAS A YEAR
AGO OVER THE DIRECTION OF EVENTS ON THE TAIWAN ISSUE.
EMPHASIZING PEKING'S CONCERN OVER SOVIET AND JAPANESE-
RIGHTIST AGITATION ON THE ISSUE, ITS SPOKESMEN HAVE ADOPTED A
TOUGHER LINE WHICH INCLUDES REMINDERS OF THE POSSIBLE ROLE OF
THE ARMY IN PROTECTING PEKING'S INTERESTS AND IN RECOVERING
TAIWAN. THE MILITARY THEME APPEARS PRIMARILY AIMED AT IN-
CREASING CONCERN IN TAIWAN OVER POSSIBLE FUTURE PRC ACTIONS. IT
MAY ALSO REFLECT SOME RESTIVENESS OVER US POLICY. HOWEVER, US
INTENTIONS WITH REGARD TO TAIWAN WERE NOT MENTIONED, AND THE
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CHINESE SEEM TO HAVE CAREFULLY AVOIDED CONTRADICTING THE UNDER-

STANDING WITH THE UNITED STATES ON THE TAIWAN ISSUE. END SUMMARY.

1. AT THE ANNUAL PEKING MEETING ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE FEB. 28, 1947 TAIWANESE UPRISING AGAINST NATIONALIST RULE, PRC SPEAKERS ASSESSED THE FUTURE OF THE TAIWAN ISSUE IN SUBDUED TERMS AND APPEARED LESS OPTIMISTIC THAN LAST YEAR ON THE POSSIBILITY OF PROGRESS TOWARD THE UNIFICATION OF TAIWAN WITH THE MAINLAND. WHERE THE LEADING SPEAKERS LIAO CHENG-CHIH AND FU TSO-YI HAD LAST YEAR CITED DIPLOMATIC SUCCESSES--PARTICULARLY THE SHANGHAI AND TANAKA COMMUNIQUE--AS SETTING A TREND WHICH MADE UNIFICATION INEVITABLE, THIS YEAR THEY OMITTED ANY SUCH LIST AND TALKED IN MORE DEFENSIVE TERMS. PERHAPS REFLECTING THE LACK OF RESPONSE FROM TAIPEI AND THE IMPROVEMENT IN NATIONALIST MORALE, FU-TSO-YI DID NOT RENEW THE CALL HE MADE LAST YEAR FOR UNCONDITIONAL TALKS BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES--A CALL WHICH WAS SUBSEQUENTLY REPEATED IN OTHER PRC MEDIA PRONOUNCEMENTS.

2. ANOTHER MAJOR ASPECT WAS THE FAILURE TO REPEAT LAST SUMMER'S SLOGAN OF "PEACEFUL REUNIFICATION" AND THE REINTRODUCTION INSTEAD OF AN IMPLIED THREAT OF A POSSIBLE MILITARY SETTLEMENT OF THE TAIWAN ISSUE. FU TSO-YI HARKED BACK TO THE THEME THAT CHINA ALONE WOULD DECIDE THE MEANS BY WHICH TAIWAN WOULD BE LIBERATED. HE ALSO WARNED THAT THE "TAIWAN STRAITS ARE TODAY NO LONGER AN OBSTACLE TO THE LIBERATION OF TAIWAN," A NEW LINE PRESUMABLY DESIGNED TO PLAY ON NATIONALIST FEARS OF US UNWILLINGNESS TO GET INVOLVED AND OBVIOUS PRC MILITARY CAPABILITIES. LIAO CHENG-CHIH VOICED SIMILAR SENTIMENTS WHEN HE NOTED THAT THE PLA WAS "READY AT ALL TIMES TO DESTROY ENEMY INTRUDERS AND LIBERATE TAIWAN." ALSO IN CONTRAST WITH LAST YEAR, A RANKING PRC MILITARY FIGURE, PLA DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF LI TA, ATTENDED THE LATEST FEB. 28 MEETING.

3. SOVIET TOYING WITH THE TAIWAN ISSUE AND THE EFFORTS OF A "HANDFUL" OF JAPANESE RIGHTIST POLITICIANS TO REVITALIZE JAPAN'S TIES TO THE ISLAND APPEAR TO BE PRIMARY OBJECTS OF PRC WRATH. (THE SAME CONCERNS WERE EMPHASIZED BY A LOCAL NCNA OFFICIAL TO USDLO REPRESENTATIVE ON MARCH 5.) LIAO'S REFERENCE TO "ENEMY INTRUDERS" WHICH THE PLA WOULD

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OPPOSE MAY WELL HAVE BEEN AIMED AT FUTURE SOVIET MILITARY ACTIVITY IN THE AREA. CHINESE SENSITIVITY TO USSR PROPAGANDA ALLEGING THAT THE PRC HAS SOLD OUT ON THE TAIWAN ISSUE TO THE UNITED STATES AND VIRTUALLY RECOGNIZED THE EXISTENCE OF "TWO CHINAS" WAS APPARENT. ONE SPEAKER SPECIFICALLY NOTED THAT THIS CHARGE HAD "ANTAGONIZED THE CHINESE PEOPLE" AND ACCUSED THE SOVIETS OF USING THIS PROPAGANDA TO COVER THEIR OWN EFFORTS TO GAIN A FOOTHOLD ON THE ISLAND. ANOTHER

SPEAKER CHARGED THAT JAPANESE RIGHTISTS ELEMENTS WERE TRYING TO REVIVE MILITARISM AND AGAIN ENCROACH ON TAIWAN. THIS FOLLOWS SEVERAL RECENT DENUNCIATIONS IN PEKING MEDIA OF JAPANESE RIGHTIST ACTIVITY ON THE TAIWAN ISSUE.

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4. THE FEB. 28 SPEECHES, AND OTHER RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENTS, DO NOT EXPRESS UNHAPPINESS WITH US POLICY TOWARD TAIWAN. EXCEPT FOR THE STANDARD LOW-KEY WARNING GIVEN TO THE NATIONALIST NOT TO RELY ON THE "IMPERIALISTS," THERE WAS NO ALLUSION TO THE US ROLE ON THE ISLAND. NONE OF THE SPEAKERS REFERRED TO THE APPOINTMENT OF AMBASSADOR UNGER TO TAIPEI (THERE HAS BEEN NO PUBLIC PRC NOTE OF THE APPOINTMENT) NOR EVEN REPLAYED EARLIER NCNA COMMENT ON THE INCREASED ROLE OF US BUSINESS ON TAIWAN. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, THE CHINESE ARE PRESUMABLY AWARE OF THE RISK

THEY RUN, IN STRESSING THE POSSIBILITY OF A RECOVERY OF TAIWAN BY MILITARY FORCE, OF SEEMING TO CONTRADICT THE AMERICAN ASSUMPTION THAT THE SHANGHAI COMMUNIQUE TACITLY COMMITS THE PRC TO "LIBERATE" TAIWAN BY PEACEFUL MEANS.

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5. AN ADDITIONAL ELEMENT WAS THE MARKED DEFENSIVE TONE OF THE SPEAKERS ON THE CURRENT ANTI-CONFUCIUS CAMPAIGN IN THE PRC. THE TAIWAN ISSUE HAD EARLIER BEEN DRAWN INTO THE CAMPAIGN WITH RED FLAG'S DENUNCIATION OF PRESIDENT CHIANG'S NEW YEAR'S DAY COMMENTS ON CONFUCIUS. THUS THE CURRENT INTERNAL POLITICAL CLIMATE PROBABLY ACCOUNTS IN PART FOR THE TOUGHER TONE OF THIS YEAR'S SPEECHES. THE RED FLAG ARTICLE HAD IMPLIED SOME CONCERN OVER THE EFFECTIVENESS OF NATIONALIST PROPAGANDA THAT PORTRAYS THE COMMUNISTS AS DESTROYING CHINESE CULTURE. TO COUNTER TAIPEI'S CHARGES, THE FEB. "28 MEETING TROTTED OUT ERSTWHILE CONFUCIAN SCHOLAR FENG YU-LAN WHO INSISTED HE HAD A RIGHT TO CORRECT HIS HEARLIER BELIEFS ON CONFUCIUS AND DID SO OUT OF PATRIOTIC MOTIVES. A FELLOW PEKING UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR, CHOU YI-LIANG, WENT FURTHER TO MUTE CRITICISM BY EXPRESSING PRIDE IN CHINA'S GREAT CIVILIZATION AND LIMITING THE SCOPE OF THE CURRENT CAMPAIGN TO A DISPUTE OVER WHAT PARTS OF THE ANCIENT CHINESE IDEOLOGY AND CULTURE WERE PROGRESSIVE AND WHAT PARTS WERE BACKWARD.

6. COMMENT: JUDGING FROM THE FEB. 28 INDICATIONS, PEKING APPEARS SOMEWHAT FRUSTRATED OVER THE DIRECTION OF EVENTS ON TAIWAN. IN FACT, OVER THE PAST YEAR, THERE HAS OCCURRED SOME RETROGRESSION AS THE TAIWAN ELITE HAS BECOME MORE SELF-ASSURED, THE SOVIET PROBES BOLDER, AND THE JAPANESE RIGHTISTS MORE ACTIVE. THE EXHUMING OF THE SPECTRE OF A POSSIBLE PRC MILITARY THREAT SEEMS AIMED AT REMINDING THE NATIONALISTS THAT PEKING STILL RETAINS THE TRUMP CARDS IN THEIR COMPETITION AND WARNING THEM AWAY FROM THE SOVIET AND JAPANESE OPTIONS. PEKING MAY ALSO HAVE SOME CONCERN OVER US POLICY ON TAIWAN AND EXPECT US TO INTERPRET THE MILITARY REFERENCES AS AN EXPRESSION OF DISSATISFACTION, EVEN THOUGH THEY STRESS ON THE MILITARY ROLE STOPS SHORT OF THE DEGREE WHICH WOULD CONTRADICT THE US ASSUMPTION THAT THE PRC INTENDS TO RELY ON PEACEFUL MEANS OF RECOVERING TAIWAN. FINALLY, THE "TOUGHER" LINE ON TAIWAN, INCLUDING THE HINT--IF SUCH IT WAS--OF DISSATISFACTION WITH US POLICY, WOULD BE WELL-RECEIVED IN SOME QUARTERS OF THE PRC, GIVEN THE PRESENT POLITICAL CLIMATE.

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